On the beach, by the water’s edge, with your two feet firmly planted on the soft, wet sand, where you can wiggle your toes and dig in as if you’re about to spoon out fresh brown sugar with your feet, everything is a joy. The warm breeze, the salt air, the muffled screeches and giggles of beachgoers running in and out of the water, running away from the crashing waves. A typical sunny day at the shore - the stuff of winter daydreams and vacation postcards. But brave the waves and wade deeper, beyond the point where there is no more tippy-toeing, and the mood suddenly changes.

You are still within the line of vision of the lifeguard sitting atop his white, wooden tower, and wonder when the whistle might sound to call you back to shore. That no such alarm has yet sounded must be a compliment to your swimming skills. *The guy’s got it; no worries.* The lifeguard must be thinking. Before long, a cold current reaches up from the dark depths and wraps itself around you. You are suddenly keenly aware that you are the only warm body in that part of the water along the beach. You are conspicuous, the most obvious heat-emitting object in an ocean of…. Sharks. Staring ahead, the horizon has taken on a menacing hue. The distance to where sky and water meet is filled with the simultaneous rise and fall of 700 million waves, all conspiring to pull you further out to sea. The world below seems equally, and unbearably vast. You recall a map in National Geographic in ever deeper shades of blues and blacks, showing how the distance from the deepest trenches at the bottom of the ocean to the surface of the water rivals that of the Himalayas. You are humbled. Frankly, you are cowed. No, more like a sitting duck for a hundred great whites zeroing in on a helpless, warm meal. The ocean overwhelms you. In a moment of panic, you shift your gaze back toward the haze of people frolicking by the sand - a glimpse before the water behind you swells. And swallows you whole.

**Most people are skeptical of people who are scared of the Ocean, thinking that surely no one can be fearful of the beautiful beach and the surrounding waters. But from my research, I can show that the phobia is more common than you think. Do we really know the reasons behind our fears? There could be more different reasons than you think.**